

Isis
searches
for his
body".

She
takes
refuge
in the
papyrus
swamps.

Isis and
her
infant
son
Horus.

8

THE MYTH OF OSIRIS

BOOK

coffer into the Nile. This happened on the seventeenth day of the month Athyr, when the sun is in the sign of the Scorpion, and in the eight-and-twentieth year of the reign or the life of Osiris. When Isis heard of it she sheared off a lock of her hair, put on mourning attire, and wandered disconsolately up and down, seeking the body.¹

By the advice of the god of wisdom she took refuge in the papyrus swamps of the Delta. Seven scorpions accompanied her in her flight. One evening when she was weary she came to the house of a woman, who, alarmed at the sight of the scorpions, shut the door in her face. Then one of the scorpions crept under the door and stung the child of the woman that he died. But when Isis heard the mother's lamentation, her heart was touched, and she laid her hands on the child and uttered her powerful spells ; so the poison was driven out of the child and he lived. Afterwards Isis herself gave birth to a son in the swamps. She had conceived him while she fluttered in the form of a hawk over the corpse of her dead husband. The infant was the younger Horns, who in his youth bore the name of Harpocrates, that is, the child Horus. Him Buto, the goddess of the north, hid from the wrath of his wicked uncle Set. Yet she could not guard him from all mishap ; for one day when Isis came to her little son's hiding-place she found him stretched lifeless and rigid on the ground : a

scorpion help. The god hearkened to her and
 Thoth staid his bark
 had in the sky, and sent down Thoth to
 Thoth teach her the spell by
 which she might restore her son to
 him. life. She uttered the
 Then words of power, and straightway the
 Isis poison flowed from
 Thoth the body of Horus, air passed into him,
 and he lived. Then
 the Thoth ascended up into the sky and
 Thoth took his place once
 god more in the bark of the sun, and the
 Ra bright pomp passed
 for onward jubilant²

¹ Plutarch, *Isis et Osiris* 13 sq.

² A. Erman, *Aegypten und
 Aegypten*
 tisch&s Lebcn ini Altertum* p.
 366;
id.) *Die ägyptische Religion* ³
 (Berlin,
 1909), p. 40; A. Wiedemann,
*Religion
 of the Ancient Egyptians*
 (London,
 1897), pp. 213 sq.; E. A. Wallis
 Budge,
The Gods of the Egyptians, i. 487
 sq.,

ii. 206-211; *id.*, *Osiris and the
 Egyptian
 Resurrection* (London, 1911), i. 92-
 96,
 ii. 84, 274-276. These incidents
 of
 the scorpions are not related by
 Plutarch
 but are known to us from Egyptian
 sources. The barbarous legend of
 the
 begetting of Horus by the dead
 Osiris
 is told in unambiguous language in
 the